

TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY BOARD MEETING

APPROVED

HELD ON OCTOBER 15, 2013

TAB Members Present

Dawn Fortuna, Chairperson
Bruce Hallsted, Vice Chairperson
Ron Barnes
Ian Bennett
Kay Henry
Jim LeCheminant
Jennifer Love
Ian Murray
Troy Peterson
Mike Schmidt
Ron Wilson

TAB Members Absent

Others Present

Randi Davis
Renate Ehm
Amanda McKeever
Sgt. Dave Meicke
Alan Sanderson
Jodi Sorrell

Chairperson Dawn Fortuna called the October 15, 2013 Transportation Advisory Board meeting to order at 5:30 pm.

Item 1. Approval of the minutes of the Transportation Advisory Board meeting held on September 17, 2013.

Board Member Jim LeCheminant moved to approve the minutes as written. Board Member Ron Barnes seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Item 2. Items from citizens present.

None.

Item 3. Hear a presentation and discuss the City of Mesa Transit Master Plan update.

Transit Services Director Jodi Sorrell started by introducing herself and Matthew Taunton, a consultant with HDR, Inc. She explained that they would be speaking on the Transit Master Plan (Plan) update and would be describing the various scenarios included in the Plan. Ms. Sorrell then gave a brief history on the transit services provided in 2002 and compared them to the services currently provided. She continued by describing the themes of the Plan and the opportunities the City faces at this time.

Mr. Taunton then described the existing transit system and explained that there is good coverage in the western and central parts of the City, but that there is less coverage in the eastern portion of the City. He then showed and described the most frequent routes that operate within the City. Mr. Taunton explained average daily boardings and highlighted the

highest performing bus routes that operate within the City. He then described the boardings per mile and also noted the routes that perform well.

Mr. Taunton described the short-term scenarios, which include the light rail extension to Mesa Drive and then to Gilbert Road. Mr. Taunton described the short-term high-capacity transit services including light rail and Bus Rapid Transit (BRT). Mr. Taunton explained that the BRT on Country Club Drive only operates every 25 minutes, which is not ideal. Mr. Taunton explained that one short-term opportunity is to reroute that route to serve Dobson Road as well. He said that the area around Mesa Community College, Fiesta Mall, and the hospital is not currently effectively served and that this rerouting provides an opportunity to serve that area. Mr. Taunton went on to further describe additional short-term opportunities including new routes and rerouting of some existing routes.

Mr. Taunton then went on to describe the mid-term high-capacity transit opportunities. He explained that the first set of opportunities he was going to describe would be based on the assumption that light rail would be built past Gilbert Road. He explained that it is six miles from Gilbert Road to Power Road, and it is not unreasonable to assume the light rail could get to Power Road. He continued that extending light rail to Power Road would fit in well with Mesa Planning Department's development of character areas within the City. Mr. Taunton explained that extending the light rail to Power Road is an opportunity to intensify land use to be transit supportive in the development of those character areas.

Mr. Taunton continued by highlighting some decisions that would need to be made in the future including station locations using the assumption that the light rail is extended to Power Road. Mr. Taunton explained that this scenario also assumes that transit is extended to Ellsworth Road and that Mesa Community College Red Mountain Campus becomes a focal point.

Mr. Taunton then went on to describe the second mid-term scenario which assumes that the light rail heads south to the US 60 and travels east in the US 60 right of way, ending at the US 60 and Greenfield Road. Mr. Taunton said that this scenario transitions to a freeway operation, which would result in light rail having a different character and experience.

Mr. Taunton explained that both mid-term scenarios assume that the BRT would travel on Power Road south to Phoenix Mesa Gateway Airport (airport). Mr. Taunton continued by saying that currently most of the activity at the airport is on the west side, but in the future it will be on the east side. Mr. Taunton said that it will be important to identify where the key hub for transit activity will be at the airport in order to serve it in the future.

Mr. Taunton then went on to describe the long-term scenarios. The first scenario shows passenger rail along the US 60. Mr. Taunton showed how this alignment would incorporate with the transit services envisioned in the City and emphasize Superstition Springs mall as a transit hub.

The second long-term scenario showed another passenger rail alignment. Mr. Taunton described how this alignment follows the Union Pacific Railroad (UPRR) tracks and would be operated in the UPRR right of way. He described the diagonal cut of the passenger rail service that would serve downtown Mesa. Mr. Taunton described various matters in this

scenario such as service around the Fiesta District, the potential for BRT along Southern Avenue, and impacts to existing Country Club Drive and Dobson Road and Southern Avenue services. Mr. Taunton explained that this alternative would have a different character and that several intermodal transfers would occur in the core of the City. Mr. Taunton then showed how the full network could look when it is built out based on this scenario.

Ms. Sorrell concluded by explaining the upcoming public outreach and open houses scheduled to be held and the next phases which included technical and implementation planning. She then offered to answer any questions from the Board.

Board Member Barnes asked how other forms of transit such as circulators, car sharing and bike sharing would fit in with the Transit Plan. Mr. Taunton responded that there are finite resources and that transit services cannot cover the entire City, but there are opportunities to expand services. Mr. Taunton continued and explained that there is consideration for the formation of transit districts and local circulators may operate within those districts in the future. Mr. Taunton gave an example of an opportunity for a circulator between downtown Mesa and the Fiesta District.

When Chairperson Fortuna asked the anticipated completion date for the light rail extension to Gilbert Road, Ms. Sorrell responded that it is expected to be completed in 2018.

Chairperson Fortuna asked about the commuter rail alignments and Ms. Sorrell explained that staff evaluated the various alignment options and that there is support to have an alignment through Mesa. She explained how the City has participated in the evaluation of the various alignments, and explained that the outreach plans were delayed due to the Federal shutdown. Mr. Taunton added that the second scenario which cuts diagonally across the City rated the highest, but that no funding has been identified yet.

Board Member Henry asked about anticipated growth of the airport and a transit connection between it and Sky Harbor International Airport in Phoenix. Mr. Taunton responded that the Plan did not evaluate light rail going further than Superstition Springs mall, and expressed that he did not realistically believe there would be funding available. Mr. Taunton said that over time a bus may run between the two airports.

Board Member Hallsted asked about light rail and commuter rail being in the same vicinity if the second rail option were chosen. Mr. Taunton responded that there could be a mix of uses and that while there would be technical challenges, there is a similar set up in the west valley along interstate 10.

Mr. Taunton provided additional details about ownership of the commuter rail if it were to operate in the UPRR right of way or if it were to operate in Arizona Department of Transportation right of way in response to Board Member Hallsted's questions. Mr. Taunton explained that there would be a higher cost to build the rail along the freeway due to the various structures in the right of way. Mr. Taunton concluded by stating that the intent is to determine the alignment and the next phase would determine the operations of the rail.

Chairperson Fortuna thanked the presenters and moved on to the next item.

Item 4. Discuss and take action on staff recommendation to approve the installation of speed cushions on 80th Place between Baseline Road and Inverness Avenue.

Traffic Studies Supervisor Renate Ehm began by giving a quick discussion of what a speed cushion is and the concept for the new Board members. She showed images of speed cushions and humps and explained differences between the two.

Ms. Ehm then showed maps of where the subject street is located and street view images of the street. Ms. Ehm explained that the subject street met the warranting criteria and provided details of the criteria. She then described the level of support in detail and explained the public outreach methods used, including the neighborhood survey and the informational signs.

Ms. Ehm explained staff's recommendation to install three sets of cushions and explained that there is space for a fourth set in the future if desired by the adjacent property owners. She concluded by offering to answer any questions from the Board.

Board Member Henry asked if the City would go back and change humps to cushions on 82nd Street. Ms. Ehm responded that the City would not do that as the Fire Department has one primary access into the neighborhood which is 80th Place.

Board Member Ian Murray asked what the average speed reduction was after the installation of the cushions. Ms. Ehm responded that the average speed came down 6.7 mph.

Resident Barbara Turner spoke before the Board. She explained that she lives on 80th Place and was in favor of the cushions. She said that when the speed humps were installed on 82nd Street, traffic slowed all over the neighborhood as a result. Ms. Turner said that hers is a family-oriented neighborhood and for the safety of the neighborhood, she thinks the speed cushions are important.

Board Member Wilson commented that there were no sidewalks in this area and that pedestrians would more likely be in the street. He moved to accept staff's recommendation to install three sets of speed cushions on 80th Place between Baseline Road and Inverness Avenue. Board Member Henry seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:15 pm.